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SUBURBS

# Concerns over Indiana abortion doctor's clinics led to at least one county law, state law: 'He had injured them by being sloppy'

By **GRANT MORGAN**

POST-TRIBUNE | SEP 29, 2019



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FILE - This image made from a Dec. 1, 2015, video provided by WNDU-TV shows Ulrich Klopfer in South Bend, Ind. Officials whose offices are investigating the discovery of more than 2,200 medically preserved fetal remains at an Illinois house of Dr. Klopfer who performed abortions for decades in Indiana will hold a press conference on Thursday, Sept. 19, 2019, to discuss the case. Klopfer died earlier this month. (WNDU-TV via AP, File) (AP)

Authorities have not yet released a motive for why they think the late Dr. Ulrich Klopfer stored 2,246 aborted fetuses in his Illinois home, but concerns about Klopfer's clinics were apparent years before the remains' discovery earlier this month.

Klopfer, whose three abortion clinics in Fort Wayne, South Bend and Gary were shut down by the time the Indiana Medical Licensing Board suspended his medical license in 2016, was partly the reason for at least one county ordinance requiring traveling doctors to have backup physicians that could take their patients in case of complications and the genesis for a similar state law.

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Dr. Geoffrey Cly, who served as Klopfer's backup physician for the Fort Wayne clinic, recalled taking in several of Klopfer's patients in the emergency room of the former Parkview Hospital in Fort Wayne.

"He had injured them by being sloppy and leaving pieces of tissue and fetuses inside," Cly said in 2008 testimony in Fort Wayne. "They would get infected and one (woman) even lost her uterus in a hysterectomy."

Cly revealed details of the patients' cases when he testified before the Allen County Board of Commissioners as it considered a "patient safety

ordinance” at the time, partly in response to Klopfer, Commissioner Nelson Peters said.

The house of Dr. Ulrich Klopfer in unincorporated Crete Township in Will County on Monday, Sept.16, 2019. More than 2,200 fetal remains were found at a dead doctor's home in unincorporated Will County. (Zbigniew Bzdak/Chicago Tribune) (Zbigniew Bzdak / Chicago Tribune)

In his testimony in, Cly said he had become aware of the “substandard medical quality protocols” that allowed three of his emergency room patients to suffer serious, life-threatening complications after undergoing abortions in Fort Wayne.

“All three of these patients were cared for by (Klopper) who has no admission privileges, no on-call coverage, no emergency notification system, and no quality assurance mechanisms or oversight,” Cly told commissioners.

Allen County Board spokesman Mike Green said it took almost three years to pass the ordinance after the concerns were raised.

Originally, commissioners issued a draft that would have required traveling doctors – such as Klopper, who allegedly traveled only one day a week to his Fort Wayne clinic from his Crete, Illinois, home – to have local hospital admitting privileges.

But after resistance from the Indiana State Department of Health, Peters said, the ordinance was whittled down to simply require traveling physicians to have an official backup physician who would guarantee hospital admittance to Klopper's patients if complications arose.

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“Finally I stood up and said, ‘Fine, if that’s what it takes to protect women, I’ll be the backup so that any emergency room in the city who has a post-abortion patient coming from (Klopfers) – call me and I will take care of them,’” Cly said.

As Klopfers backup, Cly did not work with directly with Klopfers and only visited his Fort Wayne clinic once, to sign the required papers, he said in a recent interview.

While Cly only remembers one patient who had a post-abortion problem after he became Klopfers backup, he stepped down three years later after learning about the St. Joseph County misdemeanor charge that Klopfers had allegedly performed an abortion on a sexually abused teenage girl but failed to report the abuse – similar to a charge Klopfers received one year later in Lake County.

“That’s when I said, ‘Whoa, this is crazy, I’m not going to be your backup anymore,’” Cly said.

Both of the misdemeanor cases in St. Joseph and Lake counties were dismissed after a pretrial agreement was reached, according to court documents. In the meantime, Klopfers Fort Wayne clinic had stopped services due to Cly’s resignation.

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Peters said he takes pride that the Allen County patient safety ordinance was used as a model for a similar state law passed a few years later.

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An ongoing investigation by the Indiana Attorney General's office is looking at the records of the 2,246 fetal remains found earlier this month in Klopfer's home. At least two Roman Catholic Church dioceses, South Bend-Fort Wayne and Gary, have offered to bury the remains free of charge in compliance with a controversial Indiana law recently upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court, but it is unclear when the remains will be transported from authorities in Will County, Illinois.

"The (Attorney General's) Office is working with Will County, Illinois, to transfer the remains to Indiana; however, that has not yet occurred," said a spokeswoman for Indiana Attorney General Curtis Hill. "The investigation is ongoing and an update will be provided when warranted."

In a recent press conference announcing the planned transfer of the remains, Hill said his office made a phone and email hotline for women who are concerned the preserved fetal remains could be theirs: 317-234-6663 and [questions@atg.in.gov](mailto:questions@atg.in.gov).

As of Thursday, the office had received 48 email inquiries and 18 telephone calls, a spokeswoman said.

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Grant Morgan




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Grant Morgan studied economics at The University of Akron before getting his master's in Public Affairs Reporting at the University of Illinois Springfield. He has covered a variety of topics including education, the 2019 session of the Illinois state legislature, and crime and courts.

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